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**Report of the Committee Investigating the  
Use and Methods of Handling and  
Filing Newspaper Clippings**

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**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE INVESTIGATING THE USE AND METHODS OF HANDLING AND FILING NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS\***

Jesse Cunningham, Librarian, School of Mines, Rolla, Missouri. Chairman of the Committee.

This committee has confined itself entirely to the investigation of the subject of clippings and presents, as a result of its labors, facts and suggestions from thirty-four libraries. A list of libraries selected from the membership of the Special Libraries Association with a few public libraries, some state libraries and legislative and municipal reference departments added, was used for the purpose of the investigation.

The following questionnaire was sent to the selected institutions:

"In this inquiry the term 'newspaper clipping' is used in a broad sense including all clippings from whatever source.

1. How do you obtain clippings?
  - I. Independent reading and clipping?
  - II. Subscription to clipping Bureaus?
    - What Bureaus ..... Is service satisfactory ..... Faults .....
    - Merits ... Improvements suggested...
    - Do you check up such service by reading and clipping .....
2. In doing independent clipping do you find that the arrangement of reading matter often requires the purchase of two copies of a paper ..... What action could be taken to induce publishers to better arrange material.....
3. What is your method of treatment of clippings?
  - I. Classification.
    - Alphabetical ..... Dewey.....
    - Geographical ..... Other systems....
  - II. Methods of filing.
    - Scrap books ..... Gaylord pockets ..... Vertical files.....
    - Pamphlet boxes ..... Do you ever bind large and valuable pieces as a pamphlet? .....
  - III. Indexing.
4. How is dead and useless material eliminated?
  5. To what uses do you put clippings?
    - I. Advantages as collectable data.
    - II. Disadvantages.
  6. Would you purchase clippings from magazines on special subjects that interest you?"

Answers suitable for tabulating and di-

gesting were received from the following institutions:

American Telephone and Telegraph Co.  
 Arthur D. Little Co., Inc.  
 Baltimore Department of Legislative Reference.  
 Bureau of Railway Economics Library.  
 California State Library.  
 Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh.  
 Chicago Public Library, Bureau of Statistics and Municipal Library.  
 Cincinnati Public Library.  
 Columbia University, School of Journalism.  
 Commonwealth Edison Co.  
 H. W. Wilson Co.  
 Indiana Bureau of Legislative and Administrative Information.  
 Insurance Library Association of Boston.  
 Kansas City Municipal Reference Library.  
 Library Association of Portland.  
 Municipal League of Los Angeles.  
 Milwaukee Public Library.  
 National Carbon Co.  
 National City Bank of New York.  
 New York State Library.  
 Official Information Bureau, New York City.  
 Oregon Free Library Commission.  
 Pennsylvania State Library.  
 People's Gas Light and Coke Co.  
 Prudential Insurance Co.  
 Public Service Commission of the First District, New York.  
 St. Joseph Public Library.  
 St. Louis Public Library.  
 St. Paul Public Library.  
 Stone and Webster.  
 Studebaker Corporation.  
 U. S. Department of Agriculture.  
 Worcester County Law Library.

**Methods of Obtaining Clippings**

Of the libraries reporting but few depend entirely on clipping bureaus for their supply of clippings. Independent reading and clipping is the main source of this material. In some cases both methods are used but the clipping bureau is depended upon for clippings of some special subject, for instance, the New York State Library subscribes for clippings on the libraries of the state; the Indiana Bureau of Legislative and Administrative Information has its local needs supplied by state clipping service; the National City Bank of New York City subscribes to Romeike for clippings on the bank and its president.

The Arthur D. Little Company and the United States Forest Service have very efficient service and the methods of these two libraries are very similar in that intended clipping is indicated and done by experts. The Arthur D. Little Company circulates a large number of periodicals among defin-

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ite readers. Each magazine is either bound or clipped. The magazines to be clipped are returned to the library marked for clipping and clipped by the staff.

The Forest Service receives some seventy papers as exchanges for news items. These papers are read and clipped by a clerk of the department. Under general instructions to Forest officers and other field men in the Forestry Districts many clippings are gathered from various parts of the country. The Washington office is also supplied by Luce's Press Clipping Bureau and indirectly by a number of other bureaus. The several districts of the Forest Service with headquarters in different states are also supplied by various clipping bureaus.

The National Carbon Company receives a large number of technical magazines besides many house organs. These are read over every week by the members of the Publicity Department who make a note of all articles of interest or value to any of the company's employees. The titles of such articles together with a short criticism are printed every week and distributed to each employee who desires a copy. This weekly sheet circulates among the employees and is returned to the Publicity Department signed by each man showing the articles in which he is interested. Magazines lie for one week on the table of the reading room where every one can see them.

In looking over the magazines such articles as are worth filing are numbered according to the Dewey decimal system and filed on large cards kept in a card index drawer. When the magazines return from circulation they are filed in the case for one year. Important ones are permanently bound and the others are put in temporary loose leaf binders. Those of little importance are destroyed after the articles which are to be filed have been clipped. These articles are then placed in envelopes and filed along with the corresponding card in the drawer. Clipping bureaus are never used. Whenever an article of interest is noted in a periodical not taken, the company purchases a copy.

The H. W. Wilson Company clips material in advance only on subjects for which there is quite certain to be a demand. All material is filed by subject and the Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature is followed quite closely for the headings. When requests from customers are received the Readers' Guide is immediately consulted and then it will be found that the files contain a good proportion of the articles indexed there. A great deal of miscellaneous material, a good many pamphlets and large publications from many sources are secured. Experiments are being made with some methods of reproduction with the idea that copies of articles will be sold rather than loaned.

The California State Library keeps for

historical purposes files of newspapers from every county in the state. An index covering important items from August 15, 1846 to date is kept. This index is on cards and to it are being added references to any items that may be needed again. Clippings are not needed. If an item is wanted in separate form or in a convenient form to loan or give away, it is cameragraphed. In the case of magazine articles the camera-graph is used and as many duplicates can be made as are wanted. If the magazine is not in the library the Union Catalogue tells where it is located. The magazine is then borrowed and the article camerographed.

#### Arrangement of Material for Clipping

It frequently happens that extra copies of a paper must be secured or the least valuable clipping discarded. In the case of newspapers the overlapping material may be typewritten. With magazines it is sometimes possible to remove the pages entire, saving the ones containing the desired article. These can be fixed together and mounted by pasting the margins.

The School of Journalism of Columbia University very often is required to purchase two copies of a paper. In the case of the London Times, it is necessary to buy twenty such copies in a year. Where there is a set of New York dailies used, the staple news can generally be found in another paper, if in one paper, it is back to back. In several cases the subscription calls for two copies of a paper. The Saturday edition of the New York Evening Post is an example.

A general publicity campaign complaining against the prevailing conditions might induce publishers to better arrange their material, then the success will depend largely upon the liberality of the publisher and his willingness to co-operate. It has been suggested that newspapers print the news matter on one side of a sheet and the advertisements on the reverse side. Magazine publishers might be induced to commence all leading articles on the right-hand page.

The problem is a large and difficult one and it is almost chimerical to expect the make-up-man of a newspaper or magazine to consider clipping needs.

#### Service of Clipping Bureaus

The verdict seems to be almost unanimous against the clipping bureaus. Better results and more satisfaction is had from independent reading and clipping. The best that can be said of the bureaus is that their service is fairly satisfactory.

Experience seems to show that the various press clipping bureaus differ little in their efficiency. They give satisfaction within certain definite limitations. In three cases, one library sent the same instructions to three bureaus at the same time and

it was apparent, chiefly, that the bureaus did not read enough scientific and technical or trade papers in order to send exhaustive material. For simple general subjects the service rendered is often satisfactory. For specific information, the service is short of what is desired, furnishing only a clue to the desired information or happening.

The fundamental fault is lack of scope and completeness due to the limited number of papers read. For scientific purposes the service is of no practical use. Minor faults are mutilation of articles, the fact that clippers do not learn what is worth while, crediting clippings to wrong papers and slowness in delivery.

Suggested improvements are more intelligent clippers and broadening of the scope to include something besides newspaper clippings on an order for definite technical matter.

#### Classification

Of the twenty-five libraries using some definite scheme of classification, ten use the Dewey decimal system; ten an alphabetical arrangement by subjects; four their own special numeric scheme; and one a geographical arrangement.

The Arthur D. Little Company employs the Dewey decimal system carried into great detail using the French expansion of the Institut International de Bibliographie, the Illinois Engineering Experiment Station expansion, Wyer's expansion of "Agriculture," and Hess on "Automobiles."

The Columbia University School of Journalism follows the Dewey system rigorously. It has combined number after number so that for instance, the present war of Macedonia would be 949.6.08.324.1913. The reason for these numbers will appear to any one sufficiently familiar with the Dewey classification.

Where an alphabetical arrangement by subjects is followed, the subject headings of the Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature are used. In some cases it has been found advantageous to divide the subject geographically.

The geographical classification fits the needs of Stone and Webster better than any other scheme, the geographical numbers being assigned by taking an atlas and arbitrarily making divisions beginning at 1100 for Maine and ending at 6100 for Washington, with higher numbers for foreign countries.

In several legislative reference departments the special numeric scheme used for other material is applied to clippings.

#### Methods of Filing

Two methods of filing seem to predominate, the vertical file being used extensively and manila mounts with pasted clippings in condition for binding or lacing together. With collections of considerable size, a

combination of several methods is used. The New York State Library puts material classified by subject in vertical files. Of this material the more important clippings included on one side of a page are usually mounted on punched or unpunched manila sheets. Clippings printed on both sides of the page, those on New York libraries, debates material, any which should be made available quickly, but which the library cannot afford the time to mount are filed unmounted in manila folders, envelopes, or pockets. Extracts from magazines are usually stapled and fastened into manila covers with gummed tape. When there are enough clippings on one topic to make it desirable, they are put into a binder and treated as a book.

The prevailing custom among legislative reference libraries is to paste the clippings on card board or manila sheets. These sheets are then shelved with the books in pamphlet boxes and when those on one subject get to be of sufficient bulk, they are bound together, one and one-half inch being allowed at the left-hand of the sheet for punching and binding. In some cases the manila sheets are filed in vertical files, but an objection is raised to this method that one does not find all the material on a subject in one place.

The date and source should be noted on each clipping. With ordinary newspaper clippings manila envelopes 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ x8 $\frac{1}{4}$  inches (the size may vary) are occasionally used, each subject having a separate envelope and each envelope having a classification number and the subject written on the outside. Magazine separates are often placed in manila folders and kept in permanent form with staples. The title of the article, the source, date, and class number are written on the folder. These separates and the envelopes containing the newspaper clippings are kept in pamphlet boxes which have labels showing the class number and the subjects of the material they contain. Valuable material is pasted on mounts of uniform size and treated as if it were a magazine separate.

The use of scrap books is limited to a very few libraries. Some public libraries use these books for material of a permanent nature and treat them in the same manner as books. An ideal arrangement suggested by Mr. Bostwick of the St. Louis Public Library is to have a scrap book or pamphlet box at the end of each class with the shelved books. For example, at the class 325.1 a scrap book or pamphlet box could be placed to receive all clippings on emigration and immigration. Thus the printed matter in the books of this class would be supplemented by up-to-date material from newspapers and magazines.

Scrap books have been tried and found useless by the Columbia University School of Journalism. Various forms of pocket and

vertical files are found useful for a collection which is not going to run over 20,000 or 30,000 clippings. Envelopes in boxes are a useful device. The School of Journalism keeps its collection for the most part in large envelopes. Plays and small biographies are kept in small envelopes. The "morgue" has the obituaries of about 120,000 persons. Distributed in small envelopes are small notices and large envelopes contain larger items.

Gaylord pockets and other such binders are not extensively used, but they might be quite adaptable to the handling of clippings. However, this would be a rather expensive method where classification is very minute. It might require a pocket for a single clipping with little chance that there would be others added for a long time to come.

Continuous articles which run through several numbers of a magazine can be bound as a book in inexpensive buckram, in fact large and valuable pieces are regularly bound in several instances.

#### **Indexing**

With the use of the Dewey decimal system of classification, the relative index to the classification serves as an index to the collection of clippings. In the case of an alphabetical subject arrangement in envelopes and vertical files the scheme is self-indexing. By following the subject headings in the Readers' Guide that Guide can be made to serve as an index to the clippings. In some cases where the Dewey system is used the index has been transferred to cards in order that it may be made a more workable tool. When a new subject is added a card is made for the index under the subject noting the classification number assigned to the clipping.

In one instance, that of the Arthur D. Little Company, indexing has been done very minutely, in some cases several subject cards being made for one clipping. An author card is made if the article is signed. A plain title card is used for the main card in all cases and from this card the subject entries are keyed. When a clipping contains a secondary article which could not be separated, a card is made for the secondary item as in the case of the primary article, almost in the same manner as an analytical for a book.

#### **Elimination of Dead Material**

The iron clad rule of the librarian to throw nothing away is abandoned in the case of clippings. In but few instances do we find no elimination whatever. A few have found it worth while to keep everything as it proves useful sometime.

Periodical revision is a customary method of eliminating old material. The period of revision varies from one to five years. In some cases a file of temporary clippings is kept for one year, at the end of which

period material still useful is transferred to a permanent file and the remainder is discarded.

The New York State Library discards undesirable clippings when they are received from the clipping bureau and before they are classified. The Legislative Reference Department plans to remove from its files each year and turn over to the general library any material of ephemeral interest which is over five years old, preserving permanently all bibliographic material and comparative studies.

#### **Use and Value**

The information and data contained in books is generally out of date before the printer's ink is dry. Newspaper clippings and magazine separates fill the gap. Also in the present day some subjects are so new that no books have been written on them. Here again the clippings meet the need. The data obtained in this way would otherwise escape and the collection of the information would require considerable time if one were dependent on published reports.

Local clippings are considered a fairly good history of the municipal affairs of the city. For corporations and publicity bureaus a collection of clippings is invaluable for furnishing general news to the executive officers and for advertising sources and sales. In following new business they supply a need and instances are known where clippings were of great value in law suits.

Public libraries can supply the branches and schools with material for debates and current topics from such a collection. Legislative reference workers depend to a large extent on clippings for a clue to the real information desired. In the work of this class of library, clippings and other fugitive material are the life-saver of the investigator.

The Forestry Service uses clippings as a source of information concerning public sentiment. They afford knowledge of criticisms that require investigation. Sometimes they supply data concerning forest fires and other subjects and they provide historical records of important events of the public aspects of forestry.

The "morgue" at the School of Journalism of Columbia has been growing since 1873 and now from twenty to thirty prefaces express obligation for the use of the material.

#### **Disadvantages**

The chief fault to be found with clippings is that they are not wholly reliable, their authenticity being often questioned. The labor and cost of arranging in workable order loom rather large and this sort of material gets out of date rapidly. It is superseded by later official reports necessitating constant elimination.

The tendency is to accumulate too much dead material.

### Purchasing Clippings on Special Subjects

Twenty-four libraries replied to the question, "Would you purchase clippings on special subjects?" Eleven institutions are inclined to subscribe to such services, the remaining thirteen preferring to purchase the papers or magazines for the special material when they desire information appearing on any special subject. A few special libraries already avail themselves of the services of the Engineering Magazine which holds itself ready to supply copies of all articles listed in the Engineering Index.

### Conclusions

1. This investigation shows that the chief source of clippings is independent reading and clipping by the institutions themselves. The service of the clipping bureau seldom meets the needs and for scientific and technical purposes is almost valueless. The needs of each institution are better satisfied when the clipping and collecting is done by the institution's staff who are thoroughly familiar with the demands to be met.

2. The Dewey decimal classification and its various expansions is most widely used. The alphabetical arrangement by subjects following the headings of the Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature ranks along side the Dewey and has many advocates.

3. The manila and card board mounts with the clippings pasted on them in such a way as to allow binding and shelving with other material on the same subject seems a satisfactory method of filing. Large and valuable pieces are bound as books. Vertical files have their advocates and are used extensively.

4. The Dewey decimal system of classification provides its own relative index. The alphabetical arrangement by subjects is self-indexing and there is the Readers' Guide in addition. Full cataloging of clippings is ideal, but expensive.

5. The ephemeral character of the material requires constant elimination.

6. Clippings may be used the same as books and are often required to supplement printed books which are out of date as soon as published. For debates work and legislative reference they have great value.

7. The advantages claimed for clippings are their up-to-dateness, timeliness, small cost, convenience to send by post, flexibility, compactness, and they are very frequently the only material to be had on a subject when it is alive. A leading disadvantage is, the material is not entirely reliable, often being found inaccurate and sometimes entirely wrong and misleading. The labor and cost of arranging is great. They are difficult to index and the tendency is to accumulate too much dead material.



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